

**Notes from District 2 - Community Meeting
10-Year Strategy to End Homelessness
City of Long Beach**

Date: Monday October, 24 2005
Time: 6- 8 PM
Location: Bixby Park
130 Cherry Ave, City of Long Beach, 2nd District (Dan Baker,
Council Member)

Don Smith from IURD chaired the meeting.

The focus group discussion pertains to issues related to homelessness.

1. Brief Introduction
2. Open Forum
3. Open Discussion-Strategies to end homelessness
4. Wrap-Up

Don reviewed handouts, volunteer sign-up form, structure; formal comment sheet-working group leads to sub-committees. He explained that there are many areas to get involved. Don asks how many people have been to previous meetings. Many audience members have. Don reviews rules.

The ten-year strategy to end homelessness is a challenge nationwide.

The goal is to reduce the number who become homeless, increase the number of homeless people who are placed into permanent housing, decrease the length of homeless episodes and the disruption they cause, provide community based service and support that prevent homelessness before it happens and diminish opportunity to recur.

Community Service requires long term commitment from the first planning state to full implementation, community time and energy, a willingness to engage diverse stakeholders and forge new partnerships, and think creatively.

Summary of Public Comments:

Maggie: Stated she has been homeless on and off for the past few years due to a disability. Difficult when dealing with a mental illness. Need to make the community aware and how to help people in similar situations.

Mary White: Works for the Village Safe Haven. Stated that she provides permanent housing for the chronically homeless. Explained that housing can do wonderful things for a person. Also people with disability money have problems finding affordable housing.

Rick: Works for Councilman Baker. Asked if the chronically homeless prefer being out? How do you get them in the system? When the census was done people were afraid of being turned in. People with mental illness didn't understand enough to respond.

Annette La Barca: Stated it is key what Mary White said about ending homelessness. Annette brought up affordable housing. There is a class of people who earn less than \$20,000 a year. Dan Baker voted for 80% towards work force housing and 20% for affordable housing. The Housing Trust Fund is geared for people who make \$66,000 a year. Council people don't seem to understand. I would like to hear from the people who are homeless. How can we help you? Need to focus on affordable housing.

Tracy Webber: explained \$12,000 a year is barely making it. She was evicted from last rental for asking for wheelchair access. Need to stop landlords from evicting at will.

Don: I hope someone directed you to fair housing.

Maggie: Suggested making a brochure to mail out to residents in Long Beach about why people are becoming homeless.

Jill: Suggested a parade to get people's attention.

Marie: Works as a volunteer on homelessness since 1997. stated the discouraging fact is that the power belongs to the people who are not in sync with people who want to help get homeless people housed. No city can be healthy with poverty. Need to get better city council people with broader viewpoints. It will require a lot more change than we can begin to contemplate. Very low income needs subsidized housing. Start thinking from the ground up. 550,000 acres in Long Beach. 400 acres could be built on.

Gary S.: Vice chair of homeless advocacy committee. Stated it is a mistake not to talk about creating more hard line ordinances such as blocking sidewalks, getting rid of shopping carts that the homeless use.

Eva: stated she didn't understand

Gary Sheldon: Explained some people feel that to deal with homelessness is to get rid of them. Force them to go somewhere else. It is a mistake not to recognize this. I don't feel this way

Don: stated those thoughts have to be brought up.

Jack: stated he agrees with Gary. No one wants to verbalize it. It is important for this process to acknowledge it.

Eva: stated it's sad that people would feel this way.

Areas of Focus Across the Country

- Homeless Prevention-Last week someone discussed 10 signs to look at for when someone might become homeless
- Chronically Homeless-Federal definition is a person with a disability that has been homeless for a year or more or has had four episodes in the last three years.
- Transitional Homeless
- "Housing First" model
- Coordinated Care Management-wrap around services

Audience member: Asked what happens to people without substance abuse problems? Are they part of the federal government plan?

Don: Responded that they don't fit into the chronically homeless category. Considered more of episodic homelessness. Most plans have gone beyond chronically homeless.

Eva: Asked if the federal government is concerned about ending homelessness why are they getting rid of section 8?

Don: Responded good question. Efforts have been to decrease section 8-program funding.

Maria: Stated when someone comes up with a good idea and it gets torn apart in Congress. Money for homelessness funds are a national catastrophe.

Eva: Suggested they give it to working people.

Don: Reviewed study from Pennsylvania.

Strategies-Open Forum

Homeless Prevention

Pina: Stated that we need to have a central resource to get help and tell friends and neighbors about homeless prevention. Eviction prevention fund. City does have this but it is under funded. The source of those funds is limited.

Gary S.: Stated legal advocacy is needed to prevent unfair evictions.

Pina: Social worker in Santa Monica for 11 years working with the homeless. Stated we need enough mental health resources upfront and early to address needs.

Maggie: stated we need a support system for families on how to deal with mental illness.

Don: explained that could be connecting people back with families and providing support

Chronically Homeless:

Don: Explained Assertive community Treatment Teams in Philadelphia identified needs and resources and almost insists that homeless people move into housing. Three contacts rule then it became a law enforcement issue.

Pina: stated she knows people personally that cannot live indoors after time on the streets.

Maggie: stated veterans have the same problem.

Rick: Asked are there incentives to get in?

Don: Confirmed Housing is the incentive.

Tracy: Stated she was approached by woman who worked for the multi service center, and made several appointments with her, but she never came to help.

Don: Asked what strategies are employed in Long Beach?

Gary: Stated scattered site housing for mentally ill people. Subsidized housing. Essence of community education is to let people know who is out there.

Don: Do we need more outreach?

Maggie: stated the multi service center does not know about all the programs out there.

Don: Asked what do we do?

Maggie: stated better coordinated/informed case management.

Rick: Added The Village has fairly good case management.

Maria G.: stated more people need help and there are not enough resources

Rick: stated there are other agencies.

Maria: confirmed 100 other agencies-faith based and non-profit.

Don: asked where do you start with similar resources?

Maria: explained a need to find out about special problems.

Don: stated a survey was completed to get information about this.

Maria: offered that people were chased away.

Don: Asked what is your top idea Maria.

Maria: answered "Housing First."

Don: asked if the focus is on chronically homeless or broader?

Maria: replied start with efficiency units.

Eva: added rent control.

Don: Stated slim in passing.

Maria: replied that there needs to be an effort to get apartment association in the process, offer incentives.

Eva: stated we need to create tax incentives to create some affordable housing.

Pina: offered Celebrities are willing to give money, but want to see a plan.

Don: acknowledged with Prop. 63 a tax of 1% on a million dollar income goes to the mentally ill.

Gary S.: stated we need to understand the scope of the situation. Renter to owner status needs to shift. At the rate were going it will take 40-60 years to house the 4500 currently homeless. 70-200 years before problem is handled. Need to increase the pace.

Transitional Homeless

Eva: stated good paying jobs and benefits are needed.

Don: Asked how to connect people to these resources?

Audience member: replied job fair and resource center with aggressive job placement.

Don: asked how often?

Maria: added Goodwill can place fairly quickly. They have more jobs and training that are coupled with life skills.

Don: stated that Faith based groups are assisting people to get off the streets. Adopting a family and help them get on their own. This is the Hands up approach.

Maggie: stated a need for more help to get food and clothing, insure assistance, work attire, transportation, and childcare.

Don: added the longer a person remains on the streets the more difficult it is to address. We need to help the first three months to get out of the cycle.

Maria: stated we are teaching children that it is okay to be homeless. They have difficulties in school and are anxious.

Pina: replied we need to go to school and identify these children.

Maria: explained there is a good school for homeless children. It takes 45 children.

Gary S: stated we should identify how certain groups/communities are preventing homelessness.

Maria: added Hispanic people take care of their own. We should identify cultural approaches to prevent homelessness and duplicate.

Don: Explained this should be examined at working group meetings.

Maria: Continued we need to support groups who are not pushing members out of the family, support group activities, improve council, top down approach, and get community leadership.

Tracy: stated that HUD works with the government. We need to aggressively go after federal money to create housing.

Gary S: stated we need to remove barrier zoning and look at zoning land use to create more opportunities.

Eva: replied housing shouldn't always be in bad areas. We need to create opportunities city wide not just in low-income areas. We should mandate

subsidized housing. And apply housing trust fund towards low-income housing.
Don't have exclusionary zoning

Maria: suggested that we engage state government reps.

Lee: explained we need a new category-Community Education on Homelessness to address

- Needs vs. resources
- How can individuals help?
- How can individuals hurt?
- How can groups help?
- How can groups hurt?

Don: suggested a parade to highlight issues and brochure on homelessness sent to people in Long Beach.

Susan: volunteered the causes of homelessness

Don: asked how to engage people in these issues?

Eva: stated she found out about meeting by calling the gas company. It was on the recoding.

Tracy: suggested a newsletter

Maggie: offered that we could give people information to get involved in political process.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.